

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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ONLY A BUSINESS MAN.

BY MAY DRYDEN.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was half-past five on Monday morning, and autumn was now well advanced, so that the early mornings were by no means so pleasant as they had been through the long summer months.

Autumn does not come so kindly to us Northern folk as it does in the South of England. Here the leaves do not hang on the trees to fall at last in a ruddy old age, making brown, and red, and yellow heaps of beauty in the lanes and byeways; here they fall while still green, and the rain and fog make of them unpleasing masses of decaying vegetation. These same rain and fog, with their accompanying chilling, damp winds, make us long for the more genuine and wholesome cold of winter. Altogether, autumn is a sad time, a depressing period of the year with us; we see so little of the genial ripeness and richness of the vegetable world, so little of the fulness of the harvest; and so much of the dreary falling to pieces, the rapid decay of summer's lovely structure.

This autumn was a specially sad one to many, full of ominous forebodings, which were to come with early winter to a terrible fulfilment.

Even Minnie Leighton, frivolous, gay-hearted little butterfly that she was, was affected by the general depression, and kept close to Deborah's side as they went silently to their work in the Hollow. Not even Long Tom could tempt her from her sister's protection on this morning, so he was fain to walk with her and Deborah, an arrangement which probably suited him better than being with Minnie alone.

He talked all the way, in his character of

noisy agitator, giving many hints of troubles to come and of great doings in which he was to take a prominent part.

Deborah was absent-minded; seeing that he did not mean to tell her anything definite or new, she made no answer to all his grandiloquent speeches. But Minnie slipped her little hand under the young man's arm with an appealing touch, and said gently:

"Oh, Tom dear, I'm afraid thou'll be gettin' into trouble."

"And what if I do get into trouble, my lass? There's always some must suffer for the good of the rest. But never thou fear, Minnie; if thee and Deborah 'll trusten to me, I'll see to thee."

"I'll trust none to thee, Tom," said Deborah coldly. "Thou knows as well as I do thou'st in a wrong course altogether."

Tom frowned and bit his lip, but could not keep down a blush. It was wonderful to see what a power over him and others Deborah's opinion was.

They were silent now, for they were entering the mill-yard, and even Debby sighed and looked sorry when she saw Mark Fenchurch standing by the mill-doors, scanning with a keen and stern look the faces of his workpeople as they entered to their work, and now and then making a remark aside to Gordon.

Mark Fenchurch was a hard man, and much disliked amongst his hands. One little saying, current amongst them, was very characteristic of the man, and showed how differently from Gordon he was judged. All Lancashire folk know what "waste" is, and how important it is that there should be as little of it as possible. Fenchurch's hands used to say:

When Gordon Fenchurch comes round this place,
Says he, "My dear, pick up this waste."

When Mark Fenchurch comes round this place,
Says he, "You devil, pick up this waste!"

This morning, as Tom went in at the door, he contrived to stumble, so as to brush clumsily against his master's arm. Mark, turning angrily, bade him mind what he was about. The workman, standing still, stared full in the face of the other, and replied insolently and in his broadest dialect:

"Moind thisel', wilta, Fenchurch!"

In spite of a warning touch from Gordon, Mark answered again, quickly but quietly:

"You need not go in to your work to-day. Consider yourself discharged."

"Aw' reet," said Tom. "It's coom a bit sooner nor I thought for, bu' it's aw' reet."

He turned and went away, and Gordon said sadly:

"You have given the signal for a strike, Mark, and perhaps worse."

"I can't help that," said Mark. "Better a strike than rank insubordination. That fellow has been in mischief a long time."

"I knew that, too," said Gordon. "But I hoped to get rid of him quietly. We may be prepared for rough doings now. I think you hardly realise how much ill-feeling towards us there is amongst these people."

Everything went on in the mill that morning with ominous smoothness. The overlookers found less occasion than usual for the sharp rebukes of carelessness and idleness they were generally obliged to dispense. But Long Tom's two looms stood empty, and his young brother, a sharp lad of fifteen, asked of his next-door neighbour:

"Where's eaur Tom?"

"He's gotten th' sack," was the reply.

"Pass th' word on then," said the lad. "Thou know'st the sign."

The word was passed on, and the result was that after the dinner-hour that day, Deborah, her father, and some twenty more were all of the six hundred hands who worked for the Fenchurches who presented themselves at the yard-gates. So the engines were stopped, and the mill-doors closed, and the great body stood lifeless, wanting the human adjuncts that made its vast mechanism available.

Silence reigned that afternoon in Wilton, but towards evening knots of men, who had been loitering at the street-corners since noon, began to gather into larger groups, and were joined by others who came strolling in from the surrounding districts. Phoebe Carfield, hastening home in the dusk of the evening, noticed the gathering crowd, noticed, too, that she met none of the mill-girls as was usual at this

time, and felt so uneasy that she called at the Holme to ask Clarence if she knew whether anything was the matter. Clarence did know, and was very uneasy. Gordon and Mark were down at the mill, she said; Peter was with them, and she believed they wanted Luke too.

"I will go and send him," said Phoebe quietly. "He will just be home to tea, and then, Clarence, I shall come back here. I could not bear to be waiting up at home and knowing nothing about it. I may come, may I not?"

"Yes; and oh, Phoebe, bring Matty! Dick is down at the mill, too. Phoebe dear, if we must be anxious, let us be anxious together to-night. I only wish Deborah were here too."

Phoebe hurried home, and dispatched Luke to the mill, and with Matty returned to the Holme. She was none too soon. In another hour the streets were almost impassable, and a murmur began to be heard through the dark, as of a large and angry crowd.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE noise in the one street of Wilton grew, as the twilight deepened into dark. The three girls, sitting together in the little study at the Holme, and waiting anxiously for news, could distinguish the voices of the people as they passed, singing and shouting, by the gate on their way from Pardborough to the Hollow. Presently they heard music, and Matty ran to one of the front windows and flung it up. Through a break in the evergreens she could see the road, and, coming along it, what seemed to her a vast crowd. In reality, there were probably not more than two hundred people, but, crushing and crowding upon each other in tumultuous disorder, they appeared to be many more. Drawn at their head, in a costermonger's cart, which some ten or a dozen lads pushed and pulled in noisy glee, were three worthies of Pardborough, well known by sight to Matty. These were an old itinerant musician, with his son and grandson, who followed the same trade. They were no mean performers, when, as seldom happened, they were sober, and they were known as Old Sam Sims, young Sam Sims, and young Sam Sims's son.

In spite of her anxiety, Matty's spirits rose as she watched and listened. She was one of those people to whom fear of physical danger is unknown, nay, who even experience a certain strange exhilaration

in presence of it. Clarence was brave, too, but in a different way. As she looked she turned white.

"These are none of them our work-people," said she. "They are the Irishmen from Pardborough. Oh, Phœbe! They might have managed our own men, but what can they possibly do against these?"

At that moment the door opened behind them, and, turning, they saw Deborah. Clarence sprang forward and seized her hands.

"Oh, Deborah, we have been wanting you so!" cried she. "How did you come? You must stay now and help us to wait."

"Nay, that I cannot," said Deborah, speaking quietly but with a thrill of intense excitement in her fine musical voice. "Thank Heaven, I have sommat to do besides wait—that would kill me! I've come from th' mills, and I want th' measter's pistols."

"I will get them," said Clarence, leaving the room at once, while Phœbe, gently pushing Deborah into a chair, said:

"Rest and tell us—please tell us what is going on in the Hollow."

"They've fired th' reading-room, and they're set on firing th' mills. They're gone clean mad, I think. An' th' rowdies from th' country round are there, and as I came up I met th' Pardbro' roughs. Oh, why does not Miss Clarence make haste? I'll be too late!"

"She's coming. Tell me, Deborah, how came they to send you?"

"I'm known to our lads, yo' see. None of 'em would touch me. I brought Master Peter with me to th' station wi' my shawl over his head to pass him for a lass. He has gone to Homcester for the soldiers. Good-bye!"

Seizing the pistols which Clarence held out to her, she disappeared again. Matty closed the dining-room window, and returned to the study with flashing eyes and heightened colour.

"Girls," said she, "I want to go down to the mills; I can't stay shut up here any longer. I shall go."

"No," said Phœbe softly but very decidedly; "you must stay here, Matty. What could you do? You would only make them more anxious."

"Deborah is there," said Matty wilfully.

"Yes," said Phœbe; "but we are not like Deborah; we can only stay here and envy her."

Down at the mills, Mark and Gordon Fenchurch, Luke Carfield and Dick, shut

into the counting-house, were waiting with what patience they might the return of Deborah or the arrival of the soldiers from Homcester. The light from the burning reading-room opposite filled the room, and just now the fire was great enough to occupy the attention of the crowd, who were every moment becoming more mad. Gordon paced the room in his usual manner, with bent head and clasped hands; the others watched the conflagration with growing excitement. Suddenly Mark, who for an hour past had hardly been able to control his anger, and whose curses had been loud and deep, exclaimed, "I shall speak to them!" and flung up the window.

"For Heaven's sake, no!" cried Gordon, springing to his side and trying to draw him back. He was too late; already he had been noticed, and with a shout of triumph twenty or thirty men had sprung towards the window which was nearly on a level with the ground, and had drawn him through it. Gordon leaped after him, and Dick would have followed but that one of the men pushed him back, saying:

"Now, measter, this is none o' thy pudden'; keep thy fingers eaut o' th' mixin' o' 't, wilt? We'n nowt agen' ye!"

A dozen hands were stretched out to close the window again, and in a moment the brothers Fenchurch were in the midst of the crowd, pulled this way and that, jeered at, cursed at, and hustled. Gordon was absolutely quiescent—content so long as he knew that Clarence and Phœbe were safe at the Holme, and that, for the present at any rate, the mills were safe, since the crowd had him and Mark to wreak their vengeance on—rather him than his beloved machinery. Clarence had often told him he cared for his looms and his engines more than for his life, and he remembered her saying so now, and even smiled to find how true it was. Then he thought of Phœbe, and suddenly recollected that only so lately as yesterday he had made up his mind to try whether life had not still in store for him its greatest blessing, and the thought that he was leaving it caused him to feel a deeper pang of regret than he had ever thought it possible death would bring him. Then he knew no more, for a stone, flung by one of the Pardborough roughs, struck his temple, and he became insensible.

Meantime Mark, swearing and struggling like a madman, and amidst the hooting and laughter of the crowd, was borne up the street towards Pardborough.

It must be remembered that this was not a crowd of angry men fighting for the redress of any real grievance. Long Tom, the ringleader, was undoubtedly actuated by the keenest of all possible human motives—intense personal hatred of Gordon. He was much admired by his fellow-workmen, and many took part in the riot merely because he led them, and believed that they had a grievance because he said so.

Many, again, thought it a fine opportunity for repaying with interest Mark's stern, keen supervision, contemptuous manner, and rough words. But the most dangerous element of the crowd was composed of the Irishmen, the very dregs of the population of Pardborough, a place which, even when it wore its best side out, had the reputation of being the worst-conducted village for many a mile round, and that, too, in a mining district where in every village good manners and good morals were at a discount.

Deborah, leaving the Holme gate, had made the best of her way back to the Hollow. But she had to follow in the track of the Pardborough contingent, nor could she induce these men, to none of whom she was known, to allow her to pass them. Thus it happened that, instead of forcing her way back to the counting-house, as she had intended, she was for a long time detained helpless on the edge of the crowd.

It was well that she was so detained, for, as the human mass surged towards Pardborough, she was engulfed in it, and a minute later found herself brought face to face with Mark Fenchurch and his captors.

It was not in her strong and decided nature to waste time in thinking. Had she done so, her golden opportunity would have been lost. With one quick movement, she placed herself at her master's side. As good fortune would have it, the young men who held him were Wilton men, neither of them much past boyhood, and both of them accustomed to see in Deborah a recognised judge of right and wrong. They fell back as she approached, instinctively trying to lose themselves in the crowd before she could recognise them, and, leaving no time for their places to be taken by others, Deborah thrust a pistol into the hand of Mark Fenchurch.

"This is for Mr. Gordon," said she, holding up the other. "Tell me where he is."

Mark was no coward. He would never have dreamt of trying to leave the crowd without his brother. Pistol in hand, he had the advantage of his opponents, and he at once turned with Deborah to endeavour to rejoin Gordon. They had not far to seek. In the course of a few minutes they came upon Long Tom and Ben Crossley, holding the younger Fenchurch between them. Catching sight of his pallid face and closed eyes, Deborah for the moment thought him dead, and, trembling from head to foot, she almost lost her self-command, and fainted, but not quite. Recovering instantly, she spoke out in a strong, clear, passionately-indignant voice:

"Shame on ye—shame on ye! Hundreds of you trying to kill two men, and those two them as have found you bread to eat and clothes to wear! Aye, they have, for they've found you work to do, and him that you've killed there has been more tender and loving over you than your own fathers. Oh, I hate you—I'm ashamed of you—I'm loth to own you for Lancashire lads, cowards, murderers that you are!"

"Gently, lass—gently," said one of the elder men, coming forward into the little clear space that Deborah's energy had cleared around her and her employer. "Th' lad's none dead yet, nor shall be whole aw can lift a hand to help 'un."

"Take hold of him, then," said Deborah. "And you," turning fiercely on Long Tom, "let him go this instant!"

Tom's face, on which the usual sullen look had been replaced by an expression of almost feverish delight, fell, but he did not relax his hold on Gordon's arm. He looked round for someone to back him up, and saw his followers pressing back on each other in their efforts to shun the scorn and severity of judgment they read in Deborah's eyes.

So the Lancashire man and woman stood face to face; of the same county, even of the same village, and fellow-workers together since they could use a shuttle or tie an end, and yet they were far as the poles asunder. In that moment Tom recognised the fact that, infinitely above him as Deborah had always been, his action of to-night had opened a gulf between them which no future efforts of his would ever be able to bridge over.

Hope left him then, and the Devil entered into him, as surely he does into all of us once or twice in our lifetime; only God is often merciful to us, and does not

allow our time of possession to be when our evil passions could bear fruit in evil action.

"Loose him!" said Deborah again.

She began to doubt whether she could rule this man before her, mad as he was with jealousy and disappointed love. He was reckless, and she knew it and trembled, but she would not let her fear show itself. If she was to conquer, it must be by showing herself stronger than her enemy.

Tom made no answer; but suddenly loosing his hold on Gordon, he sprang upon Mark, and, before the latter was aware of it, had wrenched the pistol from his grasp. The man was young and strongly-built, the master middle-aged and small of stature. Tom flung Mark from him as easily as he would have done a child, and, turning again, took aim at Gordon as he leant against old Ben.

There was a shout and a rush, but not in time to stop his hand. The pistol was fired, and, as the smoke cleared, not Gordon but Deborah lay stretched upon the ground.

The girl, obeying her womanly instinct to protect what was dearest to her, even at the risk of her life, had flung herself between the would-be murderer and his victim. That was the end of the riot. It was all over now. The tide of feeling had turned, and Tom himself would have suffered now at the hands of the mob, but for the interference of a few of the older men, who had not quite lost their senses. These took possession of him, and would have led him away; a possibility now, for the crowd was dispersing with marvellous celerity. A rumour spread that the police and soldiery from Homcester were coming, and it would not be to anyone's interest to be found on the spot when they should arrive.

Tom, however, strenuously resisted every effort to remove him, standing dumbly, and gazing with blanched face and stupidly-staring eyes at Deborah's prostrate form.

A quarter of an hour later, when help did come, the bringers thereof found no one but the principal actors in the drama just played out: Gordon Fenchurch just regaining consciousness under the ministrations of his brother; Deborah, by whom her father knelt, trying to find out what her injuries were; Long Tom, making piteous entreaties to the men who held him to let him stay to see whether she were dead or not; and Luke, just preparing to take Gordon's slight form in his strong

arms and carry him home. Peter had gone to Homcester for the second time that night, his errand now being to bring the doctor.

SOME FLOWERS OF FANCY.

THAT the lily should symbolise purity seems appropriate enough, but why should parsley in olden times have been associated with death? It is recorded, as we know, that a few bundles of parsley once threw a whole Greek army into panic, because in Greece the tombs of the dead were strewn with the herb. With them "to be in need of parsley" was equivalent to being beyond hope. The name itself offers little explanation of this superstition, for it is derived from the Latin *retroselium*, which again was taken from the Greek name, signifying the "plant of the rocks." According to the myth, however, it sprang from the blood of Archemorus, or Orpheltes, the son of Lycurgus of Nemæa. Archemorus was killed by a serpent while his foster-mother was showing the soldiers of Adrastus where they might find a fountain. On the place where he died there sprang up the parsley, which the Greeks, in grief for his loss, wove into chaplets for the victors at the Nemæan games. At these games it was always customary to deliver a funeral oration in memory of Archemorus, while the participators were dressed in mourning. Hence the association of parsley with death among the Greeks, and the long-prevailing Western belief that the plant is "unlucky" is only another instance of the marvellous longevity of superstitions. Professor Dyer tells us that in Devonshire to transplant parsley is accounted a serious offence against the tutelary spirit of the herb, and is certain to be punished within the year by some great misfortune. In South Hampshire, the country-people will never give parsley away, for fear of trouble; and in Suffolk it is believed that if it be sown on any other day than Good Friday, it will not grow double. The Folklore Record, not long ago, gave the case of a gentleman near Southampton, whose gardener refused to sow some parsley-seed when ordered, because "it would be a bad day's work" for him to do so; the most he would do was to bring a plant or two, and throw them down for the master to pick up if he chose. To give them, however, the man regarded as fatal.

But even to move parsley is regarded in some places to be unlucky, and we have read of a parish-clerk in Devonshire, who was bedridden, and who was popularly supposed to owe his trouble to having moved some parsley-beds. There is a similar superstition, we believe, in Germany, and many of our readers have probably often come across an old saying, that "Parsley fried will bring a man to his saddle and a woman to her grave." The allusion to the saddle is obscure; but it is obvious that all the superstitious dread of parsley is a survival of the old Greek fable immortalised in the Nemean games.

That the rose should be associated with death may appear strange to some of our readers, yet so it was. The Greeks certainly used the rose in their funeral rites and for the decoration of their tombs. The Romans used it for similar purposes, and, we are told, often left legacies for the express purpose of keeping their tombs adorned with the flower. Whether it was by them that the practice was introduced into England is not capable of direct proof, but it is worthy of note that at Leckley, a place where the Romans were often located in large numbers, it was a custom of comparatively recent experience for girls to plant roses upon the graves of their dead lovers. Hence, no doubt, its origin in Gay's riddle:

What flower is that which royal honour craves?
Adjoin the Virgin, and 'tis strewn on graves.

The answer is "Rosemary," which, although sometimes understood to mean the Rose of the Virgin Mary, was neither a rose, nor in any special way associated with the Virgin. On the other hand, the rose is associated by most Catholics with the Mother of the Saviour, and in Italy especially, during the celebrations of May, the rose is abundantly used. By some it has been thought that the early association of the rose with death led to the expression "under the rose," applied to anything to be done in secret or silence. Others, again, have ascribed the origin of the expression to the perfect beauty of the flower, which, as language is unable to portray it, is a symbol of silence. Sir Thomas Browne, however, says the origin was either in the old custom of wearing chaplets of roses during the "Symposiack meetings," or else because the rose was the flower of Venus, "which Cupid consecrated unto Harpocrates, the god of silence." There is a basis of probability in both theories, and we know that the rose was peculiarly the

property of the goddess of love. Indeed, according to the old fable, the flower was originally white until dyed by the blood which flowed from the foot of Venus, pierced by a thorn as she ran to the aid of her loved Adonis. Hence, Spenser says:

White as the native rose, before the change
Which Venus' blood did in her leaves impress.

According to others, however, it was the blood of Adonis which dyed the flower. Thus Bion, in his Lament: "A tear the Paphian sheds for each blood-drop of Adonis, and tears and blood on the earth are turned to flowers. The blood brings forth the rose, and the tears the wind-flower. Woe, woe, for Adonis! he hath perished, the lovely Adonis!"

This tradition is preserved in the German name, Adonis-blume, which, however, is usually applied to the anemone. The rose, however, being the emblem of love, and love having a natural abhorrence of publicity, it is not difficult to see the connection with silence. It is said that the Romans used to place a decoration of roses in the centre of their dining-rooms, as a hint to the guests that all that was said at the banqueting-table was in the nature of "privileged communications," and in old Germany a similar custom long prevailed. In the sixteenth century a rose was placed over confessionals, and the inference is that the hint was then well understood. There was also an obvious meaning in the adoption by the Jacobites of this flower as the emblem of the Pretender, to whose service they were secretly sworn. It was the white rose which was especially affected by the Stuarts, and the Pretender's birthday, the 10th of June, was for long known as "White Rose Day," much as "Primrose Day" is now definitely associated with the late Lord Beaconsfield. Of course the story of the Wars of the Roses is known to everybody, and how, in consequence, the rose became the emblem of England, as the thistle is of Scotland, and the shamrock of Ireland.

In the East there is even more of poetic significance attached to a rose than with us. It is related of Sadi, the Persian poet, that, when a slave, he earned his freedom by the adroit use of the flower. One day he presented a rose to his master, with the remark, made with all humility, "Do good to thy servant whilst thou hast the power, for the season of power is often as transient as the duration of this flower." This was in allusion to the Eastern fancy, which makes the white rose the emblem of

life—transient and uncertain. In Persia they have a festival called "The Feast of the Roses," which lasts, as Moore tells us, during the blooming of the flowers. One of their great works is called "The Garden of Roses," and everybody knows how closely they associate the rose with the bulbul or nightingale. The belief is that the bird derives his melody from the beauteous flower, and they say, "You may place a handful of fragrant herbs and flowers before the nightingale, but he wants nothing more than the odour of his beloved rose."

Thomas Moore seizes, with happy effect, on this legend in *Lalla Rookh*, which poem, indeed, is almost redolent of roses. But poetry generally is as full of the rose as the rose is of poetry, and it would take a great deal more space than we can spare to mention all the fancies and superstitious associations of the queen of flowers. Before quitting the subject, however, we should not omit to mention the Oriental traditions of how the rose received its various colours. It is said that when Mahomed was journeying to heaven, the sweat which fell from his forehead produced white roses, and that which fell from Al Borak produced yellow roses. But an older tradition is given by Sir John Mandeville. It is that of Zillah, the beauteous maiden of Beth-lehem, who, being falsely accused, was condemned to be burned alive. At the stake the flames passed over her and shrivelled up her accuser, while, on the spot where she stood, sprang up a garden of roses—red where the fire had touched, and white where it had passed. "And these were the first roses that ever any man saw."

We have referred to the lily as the emblem of purity, but, curiously enough, this innocent-looking flower has its baleful superstitions as well. In Devonshire it is accounted unlucky to plant a bed of lilies-of-the-valley, and to do so is to ensure misfortune, if not death, within a year. Yet this flower has always been closely associated with the Virgin Mary, and according to one legend, it sprang from some of the milk which fell to the ground as she was nourishing the infant Jesus. The Greeks, however, had a similar legend, ascribing the origin of the flower to a drop of Juno's milk. The Greeks have always made a favourite of the lily, and even to this day use it largely in making up bridal-wreaths, while the sacred significance which Christians have found in the flower may be

traceable to Our Lord's use of it in imagery. In this connection, the legend of the budding lily of St. Joseph will be remembered, and we know that the mediæval painters generally depicted the Madonna with a lily in her hand. There is also a tradition that the lily was the principal ornament in the crown of Solomon, and typified love, charity, purity, and innocence—a combination of virtues hardly to be found in the character of the wise King himself. Nor must we forget that the sacred flower of the East—the lotus—is a lily, and that even to name it seems to carry ineffable consolation to the Buddhist. Thus, the universal prayer of the Buddhists—that prayer which is printed on slips and fastened on cylinders which are incessantly revolving in Tibet—"Om mani padme hum!" means simply, "Oh, the jewel in (or of) the lotus! Amen!" So Mr. Edwin Arnold, in *The Light of Asia*:

Ah, Lover! Brother! Guide! Lamp of the Law!
I take my refuge in Thy name and Thee!
I take my refuge in Thy Law of Good!
I take my refuge in Thy Order! Om!
The dew is on the lotus. Rise, Great Sun,
And lift my leaf, and mix me with the wave.
"Om mani padme hum," the sunrise comes.
The Dewdrop slips into the shining sea!

It seems that the lily, or lotus, was held sacred also in ancient Egypt, and the capitals of many of the buildings bear the form of an open lotus-flower. And naturally, in a land of Buddhism like China, the lotus occupies an important place, both in art, in poetry, and in popular fancy. It is recorded that the old Jews regarded the lily, or lotus (*Lilium candidum*), as a protection against enchantment, and it is said that Judith wore a wreath of lilies when she went to visit Holofernes, by way of counteractant charm.

The lotus which is the sacred lily of the East must not be confounded with the mysterious plant mentioned by Ulysses, and of which Tennyson has sung—the plant of oblivion and sensuousness. That there is an element of enchantment about the lily we have seen is still believed in our own country, but the association of misfortune with it is not universal. On the contrary, in some parts the leaf of the lily is supposed to have curative virtues in cases of cuts and wounds, and Gerarde, the old herbalist, even says that "the flowers of lily-of-the-valley, being close stopped up in a glass, put into an ant-hill, and taken away again a month after, ye shall find a liquor in the glass, which being outwardly

applied, helpeth the gout." We confess that we have heard of no experiments having been made with this remedy. But if not to cure gout, the flower has, it appears, being used to pay rents, for Grimm says that some lands in Hesse were held upon the condition of presenting a bunch of lily-of-the-valley every year. This, of course, would not be the whole burden, and the custom had, no doubt, a religious origin and significance. The flower is often associated with the sword of justice, and both the Dominicans and the Cistercians held it in high honour. It is worth noting, too, that some traditions make the lily the favourite flower of St. Cecilia, although the popular legend makes the angel bring her a bouquet of roses every night from Paradise.

But how did the lily become the badge of France? One tradition is that it was adopted by the French kings because it was the emblem of purity, and closely associated with both Christ and Solomon. One old legend has it that after one of the great battles of the Crusaders, the French banners were found covered with lilies. According to others, the Fleur de lys is merely a corruption of Fleur de Luce, or Fleur de Louis, and was not a lily at all, but the purple iris, which Louis the Seventh adopted for his emblem on his departure to the Holy Land. On the other hand there is a legend that a shield of azure bearing the device of three golden lilies was presented by an angel to Clothilde, the wife of Clovis, and it is claimed that the lily has been the true national emblem since the time of that sovereign. Whatever the origin, however, of Fleur de lys, it certainly means lily now, and the "Lily of France" is a symbol as definite as the "Rose of England." Or as the shamrock of Ireland.

It is curious how much superstition and romance has clustered round the humble clover-leaf. Not one of us, perhaps, but, as a child, has spent hours in looking for the four-leaved clover that was to bring untold luck. What trouble to find it! What joy when found! And what little profit beyond the joy of the search! As the old couplet had it, somewhat inconsequently:

With a four-leav'd clover, double-topp'd ash, and
green-topp'd seave,
You may go before the queen's daughter without
asking leave.

The advantage here is not very obvious, but the Devonshire people had a more defined idea of the virtue of the double clover, and they state it thus:

An even-leaved ash,
And a four-leaved clover;
You'll see your true lover
Before the day's over.

But in Cambridgeshire it seems that the two-leaved clover is the object of desire, for there the saying goes:

A clover, a clover of two,
Put it on your right shoe;
The first young man you meet,
In field, or lane, or street,
You shall have him,
Or one of his name.

This, while presenting a considerable amount of uncertainty in the result, at least has the merit of presaging something. In other parts, however, and in more ancient days, the carrying of the four-bladed clover was believed to bring luck in play and in business, safety on a journey, and the power of detecting evil spirits. In Germany the clover was held almost sacred whenever it had two or four blades. Now, as to luck, a curious thing is stated by the author of *The Plant Lore of Shakespeare*. He says that clover is a corruption of "clava," a club, and that to this day we preserve the emblem of luck on our playing-cards in painting the suit of clubs! Somehow the etymology here does not seem very satisfying; but at any rate we all know what "living in clover means." Yet, perhaps, everyone does not know that in rural districts the clover is looked upon as a capital barometer, the leaves becoming rough to the feel when a storm is impending. Professor Dyer, indeed, quotes a writer who says that when tempestuous weather is coming, the clover will "start and rise up as if it were afraid of an assault." It is probable that the association of good luck with the four-bladed clover arose from its fancied resemblance to the cross. Support is given to this hypothesis by the traditional origin of the shamrock as the badge of Ireland. In the account given of St. Patrick in *The Book of Days*, it is stated that once when the saint wanted to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity to his pagan hearers, he plucked a piece of the common white clover. Now it seems that the trefoil is called "shamrakh" in Arabic, and was held sacred in Persia. And it is remarkable that Pliny says the trefoil is an antidote against the bites of snakes and scorpions. It is not by any means certain that the common clover was the original shamrock of Ireland; and even to this day many claim the title for the wood-sorrel. Still, for fifty years, at any rate, the popular belief has been that the trefoil-clover is the plant which was plucked by St. Patrick,

who drove out the snakes from Ireland, who is still her patron-saint, and whose badge is worn to this day. But how did the name come from Arabia, and what is the connection between Pliny's theory and the legend of St. Patrick's victory over the vermin? These remain among the unsolved mysteries of folk-lore.

With the emblem of Scotland—the thistle—we shall not find so many classical associations and active superstitions, but yet it is not devoid of folk-lore. Of course opinions differ as to what was or is the true Scotch thistle, but of the several varieties of thistles many beliefs are entertained. One variety—the Carline—is esteemed in some parts as a barometer, as it closes up when rain is approaching. In Tartary there is a variety which grows to such a size that it is planted for shelter on the windward side of the huts on the Steppes. This thistle is called the "Wind Witch," because, after the heat of the summer is past, the dried portions take the form of a ball, with which the spirits are supposed to make merry in the autumnal gales. The origin of the name thistle is probably Scandinavian, and associated with Thor. The plant was at any rate sacred to the Scandinavian god, and was believed by the old Vikings to receive the colour of the lightning into its blossom, which thereupon became endowed with high curative and protective virtues. If we mistake not, it was a species of thistle on Dartmoor which used to be called Thormantle, and was used in the district as a febrifuge. We have also read that in Poland some infantile disorders are supposed to be the work of mischievous spirits using thistle-seed. The Lady's Thistle, which some believe to be the true Scotch thistle, was one of the many plants associated with the Virgin. The tradition, according to Brand, is that the white spots on the leaves are due to the falling of some drops of the Holy Mother's milk, a legend we have seen to be attached also to the lily. Then the great Emperor Charlemagne's name is blended with that of the Carline Thistle, the story being that during the prevalence of an epidemic among his troops, he prayed to God for help. An angel appeared, and indicated, by firing an arrow, a plant which would allay the disease. This was the Carline *acaulis*, which, of course, cured all the sick soldiers, and possibly may have some of the febrifuge virtues which the Dartmoor people fancied existed in some kind of thistle. Nettle-soup, as we know, is still

a familiar housewife's remedy for some childish ailments. In Germany there is said to be a superstition that sores upon horses' backs may be cured by gathering four red thistle-blossoms before daybreak, and placing them in the form of a square upon the ground with a stone in the middle. It is not easy to trace the probable origin of this belief, but many of the old herbalists mention the thistle as efficacious in cases of vertigo, headache, jaundice, and "infirmities of the gall." Says one, "It is an herb of Mars, and under the sign Aries." Therefore, "it strengthens the attractive faculty in man and clarifies the blood, because the one is ruled by Mars. The continual drinking the decoction of it helps red faces, tetters, and ringworms, because Mars causeth them. It helps the plague, sores, boils, itches, the bitings of mad dogs and venomous beasts, all which infirmities are under Mars." This same writer agrees with Dioscorides that the root of a thistle carried about "doth expel melancholy and removes all diseases connected therewith." In other words, the thistle was held to possess all the virtues now claimed for podophyllin, blue-pill, and dandelion—a universal anti-bilious agent!

But how did the thistle become the emblem of Scotland? Well, there are as many traditions on the subject as there are opinions as to which variety of the plant is the true Scotch thistle. It is impossible here to refer to all, so we may mention that although the Carduus Marianus, or the Blessed or Lady's Thistle—the origin of whose name we have given—is very commonly accepted, so competent an authority as the author of *Nether Lochaber* rejects both that and all other varieties in favour of the *Cnicus acaulis*, or the stemless thistle. In doing this, he founds his belief upon the following tradition: Once, during the invasion of Scotland by the Norsemen, the invaders were stealing a march in the dark upon the Scots, when one of the barefooted scouts placed his foot upon a thistle, which caused him to cry out so loudly that the Scots were aroused, and, flying to their horses, drove back the Danes with great slaughter. Now, this could not happen, says *Nether Lochaber*, with any of the tall thistles, but only with the stemless thistle, which has sharp, fine spikes, and grows close on the ground. This, at least, is as reasonable an explanation as any of the great national badge of Scotland. It but remains to add that the first mention of the thistle as a national emblem occurs

in an inventory of the jewels and other effects of James the Third, about 1467, and its first mention in poetry in a poem by Dunbar, written about 1503, to commemorate the marriage of James the Fourth with Margaret Tudor, and called *The Thrissell and the Rois*. The Order of the Thistle dates from James the Seventh of Scotland and Second of England, about 1687.

And now, as we began with the wreath of parsley, which symbolises death, let us end with the crown of orange-blossoms, which, among us, now symbolises the twofold life of the married state. Among the Greeks, the brides used to wear garlands of myrtle and roses, because both of these plants were associated with the goddess of love. In China the orange has, from time immemorial, been an emblem of good luck, and is freely used to present to friends and guests. But although the orange is said to have been first brought by the Portuguese from China in 1547, nevertheless this fruit is supposed to have been the golden apple of Juno, which grew in the Garden of Hesperides. As the golden apple was presented to the Queen of heaven upon her marriage with Jupiter, we find here a definite explanation of the meaning attached to the fruit. But, besides this, it seems that orange-blossom was used centuries ago by Saracen brides in their personal decorations on the great day of their lives. It was meant to typify fruitfulness, and it is to be noted that the orange-tree bears both fruit and blossom at the same time, and is remarkable for its productiveness. It is possible, then, that the idea of orange-blossom for bridal decoration was brought from the East by the Crusaders; but we have been unable to trace at what date the custom began to be followed in England. However introduced, and whether retained as a symbol or merely for the exquisite beauty of the flower, it will continue to hold its place in the affections of the maiden-bride, to whom it seems to sing:

Honour, riches, marriage-blessing,
Long continuance and increasing,
Hourly joys be still upon you,
Juno sings her blessings on you.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

SOMERSETSHIRE.

If we seek for the origin of Somerset as an English shire we shall discover it, not in any of its famous sites, such as Glastonbury, with its mythic and poetic history,

or Bath, with its healing waters renowned from all time, but in a little town perched on a hillside, with some broken fragments of an old castle crowning the height; the commanding point of an isolated range of hills that look over the flat and fenny basin of the River Parrot; over the once wild Sedgemoor, even to the little island among the reeds, where once, with Alfred and his few faithful thanes, the last sparks of the English national life seemed likely to be extinguished. At a later date, a Norman castle was built on the rude earth-fortress of the West Saxon kings, and at Somerton Castle King John of France passed two lonely years of captivity.

The group of hills on which Somerton is placed forms in rough outline the shape of the old Saxon war-axe, and the helve or handle of the axe is formed by a long narrow ridge known as the Polden Hills, along the crest of which runs the ancient highway to Bridgewater. At the foot of the Polden Hills is a chain of little villages, one of which, Edington, is, according to local history, the scene of Alfred's great victory over the Danes, when Guthrum and his host were driven to their camp, and eventually surrendered to give their pledges to the English King, and submit to the rite of Christian baptism. Close by, on the edge of the hatchet-blade, lies the village of Aller, where, according to tradition, the actual baptism of the Danes was effected. It must be owned that some authorities place the site of the battle at another Edington, in Wilts. But Somerset seems to have the best claim after all; the scenes of the great epic of Alfred and the Danes lie close together, and in the compass of these Somersetshire hills. Here may have stood the neatherd's cottage, where Alfred burnt the cakes; and there, behind those still clearly-cut entrenchments, may have been the site of the camp where, in harper's guise, he soothed the spirits of the wild Scandinavian chiefs with soft music, while with a soldier's eye he marked the weak points in their array.

It was probably as the summer lodge of the West Saxon chiefs that Somerton took its name, and eventually transferred it to the shire. And a pleasant fair-weather county it is, as varied and diversified as any county in England, with moors, and fens, and pleasant dairy pastures, with orchards and cornfields among hills and cliffs, and rude, romantic rocks; while its chronicles embrace every description of

legend, from those of Arthur and the Table Round to the stories current among the beaux and belles of Bath.

To begin with, there is Glastonbury, the holy island of the west, the Ynyswydrin of the Welsh, one of the three perpetual choirs of the Isle of Britain; and, as tradition affirms with some probability, the very earliest Christian settlement in the land. Even where the monkish legends about the spot are not to be received with full faith, they are themselves ancient and interesting, as showing the current belief of mediæval times.

In the year 63, according to the monks, St. Philip, who was then preaching the Word in Gaul, sent over twelve of his disciples to spread the faith in Britain; Joseph of Arimathea, himself a venerable eye-witness of the Crucifixion, being at the head of the mission. The King and people of Britain, while they received the strangers with courtesy, were not prepared to renounce their ancient faith, but they permitted the missionaries to establish themselves at Ynyswydrin, a remote and lonely spot, where they might practise their rites without interruption from the established priests of the country. Weary with their burden of years and the fatigue of their long pilgrimage, the venerable group seated themselves on a gentle eminence, from which they could see the little clearing among the woods and marshes which was to be their future home. The mount still bears the name of Weary-all Hill, and here the aged Joseph struck his staff into the ground, which eventually grew and blossomed, and became the celebrated Glastonbury Thorn, which buds and blossoms at Christmas, while other trees are bare and leafless. The thorn, alas! no longer marks the spot, but a stone records where it grew, and grafts from the sacred thorn have been struck and are still flourishing.

Soon the pilgrims built themselves a humble church framed with osiers from the marshes, and enclosed with mud and wattles, and round about this church they reared their huts, living there in pious seclusion, and there dying, one after the other, till all were gone, and the little settlement was left as a solitude in the midst of the great waste, haunted only by the wild animals of the forest.

Thus the place remained, unknown and unvisited, for about a century, when two missionaries from Rome, Phaganus and Deruvianus, landed in Britain, and converted and baptised the reigning Prince

and his people. Eventually, either miraculously directed, or guided by their new converts, the two saints found their way to Ynyswydrin, and discovered the remain of the ancient settlement, the graves of its patriarchs, and the wattled oratory. The wattled church became famous, and was visited by the great missionary saints. St. Patrick came there to pray, and St. David and the holy memories of the place were preserved even in the wreck and ruin of successive barbarian invasions.

We come upon firm historic ground when St. Dunstan appears upon the scene as abbot of Glastonbury, and converts the college, with its Celtic traditions and practices, into a Benedictine convent of the latest model; but it was not till the Normans came, probably, that the primitive church of St. Joseph was transformed into a solid structure of stone, the ruins of which are still to be seen occupying a peculiar position at the west end of the abbey church.

Glastonbury, too, is mystic Avallon, the island of apples, the burial-place of Arthur, whose remains were, as chroniclers relate, actually discovered in a search made by Henry Plantagenet, who had heard the secret of Arthur's burial from some Welsh bard. But the bones discovered were of heroic if not gigantic size, whereas, according to all tradition, Arthur was rather below than above the average stature. Thus, Guinevere rallies him, as he makes love to her in her father's hall, when he declares himself able to overcome her hero, Cai the Tall—no doubt a rival suitor:

Unless thou art more than thy appearance,
Thou could'st not overcome Cai with a hundred
in thy train.

While Arthur modestly replies:

Guinevere, of beauteous look,
Deride me not; though small I seem,
I would myself a hundred take.

In this uncertainty we may fall back on the poetic legend that Arthur did not die at all nor was buried, but lives still in fairyland, to reappear some day, in the time of Britain's utmost need.

Glastonbury has other than legendary associations. Its abbey was long one of the chief educational centres of the west. From the days of St. Dunstan it was noted as an ecclesiastical school, and brethren of the house established a colony of even greater fame for learning at Abingdon on the Thames. The last abbot, Whiting, shared the enlightened views of his patron, Cardinal Wolsey, and made of the abbey a great

school for the sons of the nobility; but, notwithstanding its public utility, the abbey shared the common fate of the great religious houses, and its abbot, refusing to surrender his trust, was hanged on the Tor Hill close by—where the noble tower of a ruined church dominates the little town—and his mangled remains were exposed here and there as a warning to other faithful servants of the Church. Not far from Glastonbury, at the foot of the Polden Hills, lies "Sharpham" Park, the birthplace of Henry Fielding, the early master, and, indeed, practically, the founder of the modern school of fiction. His hero, Tom Jones, is a Somersetshire youth, and many of Fielding's best descriptions are reminiscences of the scenes of his early days.

A few miles of railway or highway take us from Glastonbury to Wells, with its ancient cathedral, whose west front is a marvel of architectural richness—a veritable poem or legend in stone—adorned with countless niches and statues. Apostles, Popes, Hierarchs, Princes, Bishops, Martyrs, Saints—a crowd of effigies—make up a general effect of richness and beauty; and two noble towers enclose the whole in a grand and massive setting. Then there is the Bishop's Palace—his castle, rather, mounted and embattled against temporal foes, the moat supplied with water from the holy well of St. Andrew, which was, perhaps, the first and moving cause of the whole religious settlement.

We all know the pleasant story of the origin of the episcopal connection between Bath and Wells—how a certain divine of Scotch extraction, being asked by the King which of the two vacant bishoprics he would prefer, answered in Scottish and sheepish fashion, "Baath." A reply which the King understood as meaning, "Baith," and was so pleased with the embryo bishop's outspoken acquisitiveness, that he gave him both accordingly. Unfortunately for our belief in this pleasant story, the connection of Bath with Wells is as early as the reign of William Rufus, when John de Villula—a native of Tours, who is said to have amassed a fortune by the sale of potions and philtres to the crowds who resorted to the hot-springs of Bath, and who, having been ordained, rose rapidly to episcopal rank—obtained permission from Pope and King to remove the episcopal see from secluded Wells to the more frequented Bath.

Pleasantly sheltered from the north winds is Wells by the broad range of the

Mendip Hills, which stretch almost from the coast by Weston-super-Mare, the great watering-place of the Bristol Channel, to Shepton Mallet, while the great forest that once covered its slopes, a hunting-ground for Saxon and Norman kings, stretched right across the county and joined hands with ancient Selwood, and thence the chase might be followed across the wilds of Wilts even to counties beyond, and the broad Thames Valley. A lonely Roman road, pointing to Old Sarum, can plainly be traced across the hills, and every salient point shows traces of ancient barrows and encampments.

On the northern slopes of the Mendip Hills a pleasant strip of dairy country borders the banks of the river Axe, with Cheddar, noted for its cheese, lying in a secluded nook. Hereabouts the hills resemble those of Derbyshire, with rocks and narrow ravines, and rushing streams, and caverns hung with stalactites. The most favourite of the Mendip caves is Wookey Hole, not far from Wells, the haunt of the Witch of Wookey, of legendary and ballad fame.

Once upon a time there was a considerable population of metal-seekers upon these black and rugged hills, ruled by their own laws and customs, and with unlimited rights of seeking ore on any man's freehold. The severity of miners' laws against thieves and depredators is curiously illustrated by a custom which has survived to recent times. Anciently, no doubt, the thief was burnt, but in recent times it was the practice to shut him in his hut, which was covered with dried branches, and the whole set fire to, when the culprit was allowed to escape with only a singeing.

No sooner are we fairly across the Mendip, than we begin to feel the influence of the two great towns of the west; all the roads seem to lead either to Bath or Bristol, and, following the latter direction, we soon come in sight of Dundry Hill, with a fine view of the Severn estuary and the Vale of Avon. Now Bristol should, by topographical right, belong to Gloucestershire, the Avon at that point forming the natural boundary of the counties. But historically it belongs to Somerset and the West Saxon land, a frontier fortress held against the Mercians, heathens and freebooters long after their neighbours had adopted the Christian faith and a more respectable way of life. But as topographical considerations must here prevail, let Bristol be peacefully ceded to

Gloucestershire, while we follow the windings of the Avon till we reach Keynsham, which took its name from Keyna, a Welsh virgin, the daughter of Brychan, Prince of Brecknock, who formed a religious settlement here, in a spot favoured by nature, but, unfortunately, haunted by legions of vipers. In answer to the prayers of the virgin Keyna, however, the vipers were all turned to stone, and the stones are in evidence to this day, in the form of ammonites, which are frequently dug out of the neighbouring quarries.

A few miles above Keynsham the Avon becomes entirely a Somersetshire stream, a result attained, no doubt, with many hard knocks in early days, when this little corner of the county may have formed the Alsace of the period, with Bath for its Strasbourg. For we are now in sight of Bath, proudly rising from the riverside in rows of stately mansions, and terraces, and crescents, clear-cut and admirable with their backgrounds of green hills.

The hot-springs of Bath have been resorted to time out of mind by people in search of health from all the country round. We may believe in King Bladud, the leper, if we choose—the outcast driven to herd with swine, who found a cure for his loathsome disorder by following the example of the swine and wallowing in the warm mud-bath that was their delight. And that takes us back to a time when Nineveh and Babylon were still mighty cities, when Rome was yet unthought of, and Nebuchadnezzar had not yet gone through experiences which have a strong resemblance to the adventures of our British King. But, even with a less robust faith, we may admit the antiquity of Bath. Here was a Roman city, *Aquæ Solis*, or *Calidæ*, as it was alternatively called—a fine provincial city, with baths and villas, with temples, and groves, and market-places; the remains of which, after thirteen centuries of havoc and decay, are still abundantly to be met with.

The Saxons again, although despising the luxurious appliances of civilisation, resorted freely enough to the hot-springs, and characteristically named the place *Akemanchester*—the camp of those afflicted with aches and pains.

In time, under Saxon rule, a nunnery rose in proximity to the healing waters, which, again, in course of time, became an abbey. But civil war and devastation ruined the abbey, so that John de Villula, already noticed in connection with Wells,

bought abbey and town from the King, and, rebuilding the former, made it the seat of his bishopric. And this John the Bishop seems to have been the real founder of Bath as a going concern, carried on from that day to the present with more or less success. Its ecclesiastical history presents no striking features departing from the general type.

As a church-city, the sympathies of Bath were, naturally enough, strongly with the King in the civil wars, and thus it was with grief and dismay that its inhabitants witnessed the occupation of their city by the Parliamentary forces under Sir William Waller. All the greater was their exultation when an engagement, fought on Lansdown Hill, that overlooks the city walls, resulted in the defeat of Waller and the triumphant entry of the Marquis of Hertford, the royal general. But the victory was saddened by the loss of Sir Bevil Granville, one of the heroes of the west, a knight whose chivalry and prowess recalled the tales of Sir Galahad or Sir Bevis. Bath remained a royal garrison for two years after that, and was eventually peaceably surrendered to the prevailing side.

The rise of Bath as a watering-place began even with the Restoration. Charles the Second visited the place with a brilliant court, and set the example of drinking the waters, which had hitherto been considered only efficacious in the outward application of warm baths. Five years later, Mr. Pepys visited the city, and on the night of his arrival records: "Stepped out with my landlord, saw the baths with people in them. . . . The town most of stone, and clean, though the streets generally narrow," and he has further experience of the baths and bathing generally on the following days, which he records at some length in his diary.

If Charles the Second made Bath famous, the gratitude of its inhabitants must have caused a pang of regret when the city gates were shut against Charles's son, the unhappy Duke of Monmouth. But the authorities declared solidly for the legitimate branch, though the city remained Jacobite in its sympathies as long as the cause lasted. Indeed, in 1715 there was some attempt at a rising in favour of the Pretender—an affair which terminated without bloodshed, its leader being reported to have been Carte, the historian having escaped through a window in full canonicals.

In the meantime, the second founder of

Bath had come into existence, in the person of Beau Nash, to whom, in spite of the man's foppery and vanity, the city is indebted as one of its chief benefactors. The hero of Bath was born at Swansea, in 1674, of respectable but not aristocratic parentage, and went from Carmarthen School to Jesus College, Oxford, without distinguishing himself as a scholar. Nash was destined for the bar, but his tastes led him to prefer the army, and it is said that he carried a pair of colours in the King's forces, although his name is not recorded in the roll of fame. Later on we find him a student of the Middle Temple, a student in name only, but devoting all his time to gaming and gallantry. Even then he must have studied the art of pleasure in a scientific spirit, and he was so noted as an organiser of entertainments, that when the Templars resolved on entertaining William the Third in a manner worthy of their ancient reputation, Nash was appointed master of the revels, and carried out his functions with great success.

Soon after this, Nash made his appearance in Bath, where there existed already the rude beginnings of a social despotism under a regularly appointed Master of the Ceremonies. But it required some courage as well as experience to fill the post, in view of the ruffianism of the bulk of the gilded youth of the period, and the fighting customs of the age. The former Master of the Ceremonies had just been killed in a duel when Nash took up the reins of power, and from that time the prosperity of the city was assured. Roads were mended; streets were paved and lighted; pleasure-grounds were laid out; evening assemblies were planned and regulated; and all kinds of ruffianism were suppressed, while rank and fashion were attracted to a centre of gaiety and pleasure, where a perpetual carnival seemed to reign. Nash must have been a great financier, for all these improvements were made without undue burdens on the citizens, and the profits of the gaming-tables furnished the civil list of the King of Bath, without the necessity of exacting contributions from his subjects. And Nash really kept a royal kind of state, driving about the city in a chariot drawn by six grey horses, and followed by a crowd of runners and footmen, as well as mounted attendants, himself in a richly-laced coat and an enormous white cocked-hat. At the same time, his culture and knowledge of the world were so complete that he won the

consideration of some of the most distinguished men of his time. Pope was his friend, and forbore to use the lash of his biting satire, and those who came to mock remained to swell the praises of the elegant arbiter of fashion.

All this could not last for ever. Nash was too profuse to accumulate, and more cunning gamblers intercepted his revenues, while other men—and, what was more important, other women—and other manners, occupied the stage. But he lived to a good old age, and, it is satisfactory to learn, not altogether neglected by those who had gained so much by his powers. The Corporation made him an allowance of ten pounds a month, and it may be hoped that he might to the last enjoy his ombre, basset, quadrille, or whist, with the veterans and dowagers who still held him in honour.

Much had changed, indeed, and the alterations in manners were probably all for the better, for which Beau Nash is deserving of a fair share of credit. What a difference, indeed, between the Mohawk of his early days and the Romeo of the New Bath Guide!

Well I know how Romeo dances,
With what air he first advances,
With what grace his gloves he draws on,
Claps, and calls up Nancy Dawson.

During the past half-century, the renown of Bath as a watering-place has a good deal declined. Our English spas have been deserted for the baths of Germany, while the popularity of cold water in general, of sea-bathing, of hydropathy, has dimmed the fame of those ancient waters of the sun, whose hidden furnaces have never slackened their force while dynasties and nations have fallen and risen. But there are signs that go to show that Bath and its waters may probably come into fashion once more. The age of heroic remedies is past, and those who were accustomed to wallow naked in December's snows and are now teased by rheumatic pains, may yet one day be seen soaking luxuriously in the summer's heat of the steaming waters of Bath, and taking the air afterwards among the terraces and crescents in a Bath-chair.

Altogether modern and pleasant are the streets of Bath, where, if throngs of modish visitors are absent, there is still a general air of wealth and prosperity. There are fine vistas and magnificent distances, and you never lose sight of the beauty of their setting—of the bright river, and the green,

fertile hills, and the woodlands and hanging gardens. Even the abbey-church is as new and bright as it can consistently be, and the very monuments have an air of elegance and fashion. Then the bridges somehow give a foreign aspect to the city, especially that charming Pulteney Bridge, with the houses upon it, which recalls Venice or Florence.

But if Bath rules over the northern part of the county with undisputed sway, the capital of the south is clearly Taunton, the chief town of old-fashioned Somerset. On the way thither, along the coast, it may be as well to give a glance at some of the places of interest. There is Clevedon, among noble cliffs, as its name denotes, the church overhanging the sea like the samphire-gatherer.

There, twice a day, the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And brushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

Here at Myrtle Cottage, Coleridge made his home after his marriage, and hence he wrote to friend Cottle, his Mæcenas and publisher for the nonce, for brooms, and frying-pans, and such like tackle, of which his poetic nature had not comprehended the necessity. Indeed, Coleridge's only resources at that time were his unwritten poems—the bulk of them, alas! destined to remain unwritten to the end of the chapter—and Cottle's promise to pay him two guineas for every hundred lines.

From the cliffs of Clevedon the coast sinks rapidly to the flats of Weston-super-Mare, and there is no place that commands attention till we reach Bridgewater. Here the tide comes in with a vengeance, full sweep from the broad Atlantic, rising thirty or forty feet in a few hours, a state of things which makes its quay an uncomfortable berth for shipping. There was a great castle here, once upon a time, which was deemed impregnable, and which mounted forty guns in the time of the civil wars. However, Fairfax, the Black Tom of Yorkshire fame, captured it without much difficulty, and demolished it so thoroughly that only a fragment, known as the Watergate, remains upon which to hang its story. Otherwise, the town itself was a noted Puritan stronghold, and here, at a later day, Monmouth found a ready welcome and many ardent supporters. And here he remained encamped outside the town, peasants and miners thronging in to join his ranks, but the gentry holding ominously aloof, till his scouts brought word of the advance of

the King's army, even as close upon him as Sedgemoor, barely a couple of miles from his camp.

It may be doubted whether, if Monmouth had ridden into the royal camp and called upon the soldiers to join him, half the army would not have thrown up their caps for him. But Monmouth had no nerve for such a daring stroke. He called a council of war, when his officers, mistrusting their raw levies, decided on a night attack. In the darkness of night, it was urged, the miner with his pick was as good as the trained soldier with his musket. And so the attack was made, but with such inefficient preparation that the existence of a deep drain which protected the front of the royal camp was undiscovered, and, of course, no means of crossing it had been provided. The miners and peasants somehow scrambled to close quarters and fought bravely for a while, the enemy now being under arms and fully prepared for the attack, and the sun rose upon a mere rabble of brave men, to be quickly ridden over and cut down by the royal cavalry.

Then followed the cruelties of Kirke and his lambs, fresh from the barbarous warfare of Tangiers, and the bloody assize, to which both Bridgewater and Taunton furnished their full tale of victims.

The great hero of Bridgewater is Robert Blake, who was born at that town in the last year but one of the sixteenth century, and who continues the traditions of the great sea-captains of that age. Like Cromwell and many other heroes of the period, he took late in life to the game of war. He was forty-four at least when his military career began at the siege of Bristol, when he held an outlying fort for the Parliament long after the general capitulation of the town. Rupert, who was in command of the royal troops, threatened to hang him for his temerity, and would have done it but for influential friends who begged his life. After that, Blake, with Sir Robert Pye, of Farrington, took Taunton by storm from the Royalists, and was made its governor and held it against all odds. So that Blake had completed his half century before he took to the sea, following his enemy, Prince Rupert, from one port to another, and finally demolishing his squadron. Then our bold Admiral began at Van Tromp, and gave the Dutchman no rest till he had driven him from the seas. It was then that the sturdy Republican heard of Cromwell's coup d'état, and made his celebrated laconic speech to his officers:

"It is not for us to mind State affairs, but to keep foreigners from fooling us."

From Van Tromp the brave Admiral turned upon the Dey of Tunis, whose prisons were full of Christian captives, and soon he brought the proud Moslem to reason. Then he sailed against the Spaniard, demolished the forts of Santa Cruz, Trinidad, and destroyed the Spanish Plate fleet. After that he turned homewards, and died in Plymouth Sound within sight of the hills of his native land, just fifty-eight years old, having crowded a lifetime of glory into the last eighteen years of his life.

MY THIRTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I. MORNING

ALAS! it is too true! My first thought on waking is that I have attained my thirty-first year on this 15th day of June. The Abbé, when taking his leave last night, made me promise that I would write down with care every event which is to happen on this day, as marking my last of youth, and bade me rise early, that I might listen to the warning he had prepared for me on the occasion.

How will it be conveyed? By a sacred serenade, or a bouquet of churchyard flowers? Bah! Life hath still some charm, and I can still look forward to the future, in spite of my "advancing age." The Abbé is a dear old soul, but takes life sometimes rather gloomily. To be sure, I never told him last night that I had written to Cousin Octave that, as he seemed too shy to return home and come to my château without a special invitation, I sent him one in due form to say that he must come at once, and that I hoped he would leave for ever that horrid Martinique, where he had frittered away his youth, and fix himself definitively in France. I did not suggest how this was to be accomplished, but he will know the meaning of the hint. He cannot have forgotten the days when he and I had no need of words to know each other's thoughts.

I must say that my surprise was great when Maître Allard read my father's will. Never did I dream that he would have left his whole fortune at my own disposal, without the tyranny of guardians or hampering of trustees—but all to be my own, to be managed according to my own will and pleasure. The words were soothing

to my soul, for I had always considered him cold and harsh in sending poor Cousin Octave away, although providing for him handsomely in getting him appointed manager of the great estate in Martinique belonging to the company of which my father himself was director. The condition was one by which both our hearts were well-nigh broken. "Never more, upon our faith and honour, to seek to hold secret communication with each other so long as my father lived." And to think that the cruel decree was maintained until his death released me from the vow!

Ten years of life! Ah me! But time has wrought no change in my love for Octave—no alteration in the feelings of my heart. Aye, but what change has it accomplished in myself?

What says the little looking-glass that Octave bought me at the fair of Suramy, saying, as he handed me the fairing, that I should there behold the face he thought most lovely upon earth. That has not changed, at all events, and in it I behold the reflection of a face, still fair, if not, perhaps, so fresh as the one he beheld through his tears, as he looked up at me from the window of the carriage which bore him away. The complexion is somewhat faded, and here and there I can perceive a silver streak amongst the curls, which are still golden, although not quite so bright a gold as when he left. Ah well! Life is not all made up of doubt and disappointment, as the Abbé declares. We shall have many merry days yet at the Charmilles. And Octave? Well, we shall be happy together at last!

What a lovely morning! As I open my window, the lark is rising from the turf at the foot of the hill, and as the slight mist from the river clears away, I can see the villagers stirring in the village street. What are they doing? They are actually lopping off the branches of the lime-trees, now in full flower! The bees are disturbed, and the air is so clear that I can see whole swarms of them flying out in alarm. What can be the meaning of this despoilment? Ha! I remember now! The Abbé told me that he would remind the villagers that this is my birthday, and although not of such solemn importance as the festival of the patron Saint, they ought to note it by some token of their gratitude for all the good I am trying to do with my newly-acquired wealth. Now they are carrying the

boughs and branches of flowers to the church. That may be perhaps the warning that the Abbé was to give me. Ah, five o'clock! the church clock strikes the hour. And the Abbé, punctual as the clock itself, is standing at the church-door. He ushers in the peasants with their flowers, and scarcely has the last stroke resounded, deep, grave, and sonorous through the atmosphere, when the angelus-bell takes up the strain, and sounds clear and cheerily over the valley. I kneel down at the window and offer my prayer to the Virgin—repeating the sweet Ave Maria to which that bell summons me, by its nine strokes. But what is this? The angelus-bell has tolled its nine strokes as usual—and after a pause it begins again. The good Abbé must be forgetting the limit of his morning's task. But, no; the bell goes on tolling in steady measured rhythm until it has struck more notes than the salutation-bell itself. Yes—ten!—now ten again! When will it stop? Another ten! and now a pause at last. But stay! One single stroke louder and more prolonged than all the rest. And at last the tolling ceases in reality. I see it all! This is the Abbé's warning. 'Tis my thirty-first birthday—the last year of youth, the first of middle-age.

CHAPTER II. NOON.

THE day begins auspiciously, everything combines to lighten the spirits and make the heart glad. The sunshine is most glorious, the meadows are in full flower, the birds are singing joyously above my head, and the grass is blooming beneath my feet as I stroll across the lawn. Mother Nature knows no change. The Charmilles will be found as beautiful as ever when all those who love the place are gone and forgotten. The dear good Abbé came to breakfast with me, according to his promise, and I unfolded to him my whole heart. I spoke of Octave warmly and with affection, as I ought to speak of the man who has proved so true and faithful to his love, as to lead a solitary life among strangers and forego the consolation of matrimony, though courted and admired in the circles to which he has been exiled, as it were, by my father's sentence. I, too, have kept my faith unbroken, and resisted all the temptations which have beset my path. It is this steadfastness of purpose which, no doubt, induced my father to alter his opinion concerning the fickle nature and frivolity of women, and to trust me with the sole ad-

ministration of the estate of the Charmilles. He was surprised that I should have refused to marry the Baron de Blignièrès with his numerous quarterings and magnificent hunting-stud. He was indignant when I rejected the offer of the Marquis de Mérian, who had arrived amongst us honest, simple country folk, with all the gloss and polish of his Parisian manners still upon him. But he laughed heartily when I sent the young Count de Chalais back to his mother, who had dispatched him to make love to me, although I was his senior by several years. My father was too just in principle to urge me to marry any man I did not like; he was only unjust enough to compel me to give up the only man I loved. And so, as the years flew by, he became quite resigned to my remaining in single blessedness, and fully content with the peace and comfort my presence bestowed upon his gouty old age.

I thought much of all this as I sat beneath the acacia on the lawn before the windows, waiting for the hour of high mass. My mind was teeming with doubts and fears, uncontrolled even by the certainty of the faith and honour of my dear Octave. I had expected a letter from my cousin by return of post in answer to mine, and the disappointment was great that none had arrived. But mercy on me! While I have been dreaming the time has flown, and here is eleven o'clock! The drums of the pompiers (I have just founded a fire-brigade of seven men for our village) are beating as they march to church. Come, I must rouse myself, and make all speed there also. It would not do for the heroine of the fête to be the last to enter. I will go down the hill by the path which skirts the lawn. It is shady and silent, and I shall avoid the gossips who would pester me to death with their clumsy greetings. My heart is too full to allow me to waste its overflow upon trifles. How will Octave answer my letter? Will he come at once, or will he delay? He tells the Abbé in his letters that his life has been a busy one; that he has been much tried; that he has never ceased to think of me; and that he shall have no rest until he sees the turrets of the Charmilles looming upon the horizon. Well, well, we shall see, we shall see, as the Abbé always exclaims when I endeavour to break forth in praises of Octave. Tutors seldom have faith in their pupils, and the Abbé mistrusts Octave. Like my father, he views with some little contempt the strict adherence

to the command to abstain from all attempt to communicate with me.

But I do wish I could have a letter today! It would be a fine testimony of his remembrance of our love that he should have remembered my birthday.

Disquietude makes me peevish. The hour for the post has gone by, and I pass through the gate into the narrow path. It is not made to engender bright thoughts—a steep and rather damp passage, between the wall of the garden on one side and a high, overshadowing bank on the other. But it is the shortest cut down to the village, and I am late. In my haste I run against a man striding with hurried step towards the château. It is Bastien, the postman, bringing letters to the household. He hands me one from his oilskin pouch. I recognise the handwriting, and my heart beats so violently, my breath comes so short and painfully, that I must have fallen had not Bastien grasped my arm. He evidently thinks I am going to faint, for he fans me with the skirt of his blue linen blouse with one hand, while he clasps the oilskin pouch firmly to his bosom with the other. The gesture is so comical that I cannot help bursting into a kind of hysterical something between laughing and crying, but when he so kindly attempts, with the sleeve of the blue linen blouse, to dry the tears running down my face, I come to myself at once, and thrusting the letter into my bosom, run quickly down the hill, and in another minute stand before the church door.

The church was already filled. The Abbé came out to meet me, and following in his steps came the Grey Sisters of the school, who look upon me with heavenly smiles of gratitude, and the children burst forth into the hymn of praise to Our Lady, "who melts the heart of the rich man to charity, the soul to pity, and the memory to recollection of the poor." To this Sister Eulalie had added a verse of her own—expressive of gratitude to me for having built the new wing to the old school-house. And I had to listen, and smile, and express my gratitude, and make answer to the pretty speech composed by the Superior, and recited by tiny Babette, the mole-catcher's daughter, who presented me with a big bouquet from the school-garden, when all the while my heart was beating with anxiety, and my pulses throbbing with impatience to ascertain the contents of the letter. The Abbé's sermon failed to

excite the smallest feeling of interest, although I could not help perceiving that it was in some degree preached at me, and, moreover, I grew slightly offended when he talked of the Wise Virgins, who set aside all human vanities. The eyes of the whole congregation were turned to me, with a loving expression that annoyed me. I thought the comparison ill-timed. At length came the Domine Salvum, the mass was over at last. The Abbé was to accompany me home, and I was to await him in the sacristy, so hither I hurried in all haste, flying from the salutations and loving greetings of the villagers to whom I had ever been so patient with my time, and so liberal with my money.

And now at last I was alone. I sat myself down upon one of the oaken chests which held the Abbé's vestments, and tore the letter from my bosom with a quick impatient gesture, and yet, when I held it in my hand, instead of opening it at once I mused upon the seal. The motto was that of our family, "Patience et Vaillance," nothing applicable to our position, and then I turned the letter over and once again read the superscription, "A Mlle. Adèle de Biencourt, au Château des Charmilles, à Bocage les Ormeaux, Seine-et-Oise." Lengthy as this address may appear I lingered over every letter, and spelt out every word, seeking remembrance of the schoolboy hand which used to fill me with such joy in former days. Who would have thought that amid this apparent calm my whole frame was quivering with anxiety and dread—and that every nerve was strained to the very utmost? At length the letter lay open in my hand. At first the writing seemed so confused and blurred that I could scarcely make out a single word. It was only by degrees that the meaning became clearly present to my mind.

The letter occupied the three pages allotted to correspondents in those days, and yet somehow it appeared as if curtailed. It was warm and loving in expression, yet in substance reticent and cold. Octave began by declaring himself overjoyed at returning to Europe, and then ran into the description of all the happiness he had enjoyed at Martinique, particularly of late. "It would have been complete," he said, "had it not been marred by the privation of my letters." This was prettily turned, but seemed like an afterthought. There was, indeed, throughout loving remembrance of former days, but always the

same indescribable reticence and sudden breaking off which had struck me from the first. But as I drew near the end ample compensation was found in the announcement of his immediate return, and the hope of once more being able to talk about old times, and visit old places, towards which his heart had been yearning for ten long, weary years. And this was all that concerned our relative position. It was not till after a second perusal, more greedy, if possible, than the first, that I became conscious that not a single word of love was apparent throughout the whole epistle. Indeed, there seemed all through a sort of vacillating caution as if fearing to say too much, should he venture to say all.

There was no compensation in the latter portion of the missive, which was filled with details concerning people unknown to me, and events in which I took no interest. He told me, for instance, that his greatest friend in the island had lately died, and had left him trustee of the great estate of Les Sablons, and guardian of his only child, a daughter, to whom had been bequeathed a large fortune, while to the widow but a small annuity had been awarded. The delicate health of the daughter demanding the advice of European doctors, he felt it incumbent on him, as her guardian, to bring her with him. She would, of course, be accompanied by her mother, who watched over her with the greatest vigilance. He added that I should find both Madame de Mérés and her stepdaughter most charming, and, as he was indebted to them for great kindness and attention during a long visit he had made to Les Sablons, he would take the liberty of bringing them both to Les Charmilles. He wrote hurriedly, he said, only a few hours before embarking, and would be at the dear old home as fast as tide and steam could bring the party to Biencourt. Then, as if his mind had been disburthened of all by which it had been oppressed, he launched forth in his old witty, satirical style, quoting reminiscences of all the ridiculous old fogies on whom he used to play his boyish pranks—the last page being filled with all the extinct old family jokes, which brought to mind the good old days when we were young together. Why was it that those days now seemed farther off, older than ever? Because there was evidently a strained effort on the writer's part to assume the good humour which he knew I had once regarded as the most attractive feature in his character. And

then—I knew not why or wherefore—I fell to musing on the comparative proportion of our respective ages, and for the first time felt timid. I was twenty years of age when Octave left the Charmilles—he was twenty-two. He must now be thirty-three, while I am thirty-one. The difference was nothing then; but now the world will say, perhaps, not that he is too young for me, but that I am too old for him.

Just as the thought traversed my mind the door opened, and the Abbé entered. He started on beholding the sorrowful expression of my countenance.

"Octave is coming at once!" I whispered, as I handed him the letter.

He was struck on looking at the post-mark.

"What, by the Joyeuse!" exclaimed he in astonishment; "why, I noticed last night, in reading my *Moniteur*, that the Joyeuse had arrived and landed her passengers at Nantes. If so, Octave can be here to-day."

So sudden was the emotion produced by the words, that I was scarcely conscious of what nature were the feelings they created. I could not tell whether the revulsion I experienced was that of joy or sorrow, and in a kind of stupor I rose and followed the Abbé through the park to the hall-door of the château. I was not prepared by the possibility suggested by the Abbé for the sight which awaited me. The confusion of boxes and packages, the cloaks and travelling-gear, told me at once of the arrival I had longed for with such intensity, and yet filled me with such dread now that it had really occurred. The old housekeeper was sobbing aloud at the sight of young M. Octave, and Cauvin, the aged steward, began to pace restlessly about, almost dancing with excitement at the suddenness of the event. These were the sole occupants of the château during mass, as the rest of the servants had gone to the service.

The door of the salon was ajar, and, as I stood breathless and transfixed, I could see the shadow of a woman cast by the strong sunlight upon the polished floor, as it moved hurriedly to and fro, while abrupt whisperings met my ear. The tones were those of displeasure and reproach, and were answered soothingly in the deep, subdued voice of a man, while, from the furthest corner of the room a deep sigh was breathed, as of someone weary and in distress. I stood for a moment so overcome by emotion that I dared

not enter the salon. At last the voice of the Abbé close to my ear dissolved the spell.

"Daughter, take courage," whispered he; "remember there is a time for all things."

He pushed the door wide open, and handed me into the salon.

For a moment every object seemed to turn before my sight, and it was not until an exclamation uttered in a man's voice had saluted my ear, that I recovered my senses and my sight sufficiently to recognise in the bronzed and somewhat developed features before me those of my cousin Octave. He had grown stouter—both face and figure seemed swollen, as it were; perhaps the effect of the long sea voyage, and the heat and fatigue of the journey from Nantes. His eyes appeared much smaller and his mouth much larger. He had looked at me steadfastly as I entered with trembling pace, then sliding across the polished floor, exclaimed in a somewhat hoarse tone, as of one under past rather than present emotion:

"Comment! do I behold my own dear cousin Adèle?" In his precipitation his foot had caught in the painted flower-stand in front of the window. Fortunately the flower-pots had been put out for air upon the window-sill, but the shock of the fall and the ringing noise of the metal completely upset my nerves, so that I could not utter a word of welcome, but sobbed hysterically. He must have been embarrassed, for he stooped to pick up the flower-stand before he ventured again to approach me, and then he seized my hand in his, and, raising it to his lips, kissed it in courteous though not in loverlike style, and, overcome as I was, I could not help observing that, as he did so, he looked timidly askance at the elder lady who was now standing near the window.

"Ah, my dear cousin, how long it is since we met!" said he in a low tone as he dropped my hand and turned to introduce them by name as Madame de Méris and her stepdaughter, Mdle. Emilie. I advanced towards the ladies who had thus so unexpectedly become my guests, and welcomed them to the Charmilles with all the grace I could command. A glance at the Creole lady was sufficient to reveal to me a woman of high resolve and stern determination. She had evidently been a great beauty, but she was no longer young, and the outline of both face and form had yielded to the soft influence of the enervating climate of her country, and so had

become spread and shapeless. Her eyes were still large and very black, flashing with an expression so earnest, that I thought it almost malevolent as they rested full upon my countenance. Her dress was faultless—rich black silk covered with black lace—no travelling-costume crumpled and dirty, but fresh and crisp, and worn with all the coquettish insolence of her race—"changed at the hotel," thought I. Her hand of snowy whiteness appeared whiter still through the fall of black lace which hung over it, and every finger was decked with rings, which sparkled with dazzling brightness through the network of the black lace mantilla. She did not come forward to meet my advances, but stood firm and upright while I bowed and swept towards her with the grace imparted by the dancing-master of Beldon, from whom both Octave and I had taken lessons in our youth, and welcomed her warmly as my cousin's friend. Then I turned to Mdle. Emilie, who, unlike the flashy, jewel-bedecked matron, stood modestly at a distance, and when she took my proffered hand she pressed it, looking all the while into my face with a beseeching expression, as if asking for my sympathy. She was a pale, delicate girl, evidently shy and embarrassed, and subdued by the glance of her stepmother, for even while she was answering my commonplace questions concerning the fatigue of her journey, I detected in the look she directed towards the lady the same expression of fear and doubt I had observed in Cousin Octave. The latter was now absorbed in busy conversation with the Abbé, and I sought in vain for some subject of mutual interest which should give animation to our discourse. I could find none. We conversed in monosyllables, and in a tone so low that it was a positive relief when Josephine, my maid, came to announce that the rooms which had been hurriedly prepared for "ces dames" were ready.

My heart was full to bursting. It was not thus that I had pictured to myself the meeting for which I had woven the most poetical fancies. I knew well enough that the presence of the two ladies must be an obstacle to any kind of gushing sentiment on my cousin's part, but I had certainly expected a more frank and cordial greeting—a more open acknowledgment of our past attachment, and, perhaps, for sentiment is subtle, a more free acceptance of our probable position in the future. I escorted my guests to their rooms, in accordance

with the rules of old-fashioned etiquette, and then I rushed to my own chamber and bowed my head in resignation to the sacrifice of all my dreams, and burst into a passion of tears. No one will deem it strange that, amid the perplexity into which the constraint of my cousin's behaviour had thrown me, I should have connected it with the presence of Madame de Méris and Mdlle. Emilie. It was plain to me that Octave was held in bondage by the elder lady, but the motive of this abject fear of her very glance was a mystery. Her scrutiny of me had been so keen as to be almost disquieting, and I could not but associate with disapproval the frown with which she gazed upon me. I thought that perhaps Octave might have spoken of my personal appearance with the blinded admiration of an infatuated lover, such as he had been ten years before, and that the scornful expression of her countenance was due to the disappointment she must naturally have felt at sight of my dulled eyes and faded complexion. I think I see it all. She is bent on making a match between Octave and her stepdaughter—that is why she has come to France—that is why she will not lose sight of him. Well, the girl is not pretty, but she is delicate and gentle, far more refined than her mother; she evidently comes of better blood. And then—she is young; many, many years younger than myself. Ah me!

CHAPTER III. AFTERNOON.

THE rest of the day passed over without incident. Not for an instant could I converse with Cousin Octave alone. Madame de Méris was always beside us. She complained of fatigue, which was natural enough, and begged permission to recline upon the sofa. This did not surprise me, and I gladly encouraged the idea, which I thought would allow me to draw nearer to my cousin. So I helped her gently to the sofa and smoothed the down-pillows beneath her head, and essayed to draw the skirt of her dress over her feet. But to this she objected, and I was therefore compelled to observe the beautiful foot and elegant Spanish slipper left exposed to view. I was disappointed in my expectations, when I proposed a walk with Octave, under pretence of showing Mdlle. Emilie the bank where our swing once stood, and the flat-headed stump whence we used to knock down the egg or the apple with our ball,

and told him that I wanted to show how the walnut-twigg he had planted had grown to a tree of goodly dimensions, and how the low hedge, which had once enclosed our playground, had become thick and impenetrable. It now encircled the hillock of turf which I had religiously kept green and smooth, for on the marble bench, hidden by the hedge, I used often to sit and muse, thinking of Octave, and sometimes weeping at the recollection of his departure.

Cousin Octave greeted the proposition with alacrity, and snatched hastily his broad straw-hat from the table. Emilie had linked her arm in mine. There was already sympathy between us. We were all three moving towards the door, when suddenly Madame de Méris, raising herself upon her elbow, looked out from among her cushions, and peremptorily begged not to be left alone. Octave could not choose but obey the hint, and in my endeavour to hide my disappointment, I could not help displaying it. Octave looked embarrassed and coloured slightly as he dropped my arm; Emilie seized it and dragged me down the steps of the vestibule on to the lawn. At that moment I think the mysterious sympathy which links soul to soul was established between us, and we were friends from that hour. We sat together, this stranger girl and I, while I was somehow attracted by her tone and manner, and fancied, so much was my heart craving for sympathy, that she almost felt the cause of my depression, for she pressed close to my side as we sat upon the stone bench, and clasped my hand in hers, twining her fingers round my own, and looking beseechingly into my face, as if imploring my pardon for some imaginary offence. "No doubt," thought I, "that of having supplanted me in my cousin's affections."

My voice was altered when I spoke—almost choked in its utterance—when I sought to pretend lightheartedness in recounting the scenes enacted by Cousin Octave and myself in that very place when he and I were boy and girl together. The interest took in my description was feigned likewise; for the smile with which she listened was fixed and meaningless, while her glance was eagerly fixed upon my countenance, as if always anxious to make some communication of far more serious import than the mere reminiscences of childhood with which I had sought to entertain her.

The sound of the dinner-bell released us

both from the awkwardness of our situation, and we returned briskly to the house, glad to be freed from the restraint we had imposed upon each other.

Madame de Méris had already disappeared to her chamber, and Octave was in such earnest conversation with the Abbé that he did not even perceive our entrance. The Abbé's countenance was singularly disturbed—its expression almost indignant as he listened to the confidential communication made to him by my cousin. The latter was evidently subdued by the Abbé's displeasure. He raised his eyes once to mine as I passed by, then turned aside his glance in confusion, making an effort to cross the room in order to open the door for our exit; but I had hurried through before the attempt could succeed. And with a burning sense of some lurking wrong—some hidden cause of complaining, I hastened to my room to compose myself and put on the mask we all have to keep concealed ready for use in the secret chamber of the heart.

The dinner passed off in the usual form. Our simple, old-fashioned fare happened to please the lady before whom we all seemed to bow already in homage to that self-assertion which none of us seemed to possess but herself. The talk was all of Martinique and its society—of the high position Madame de Méris once possessed there, and of the great influence the heiress of the Sablons would have it in her power to exert over the aristocracy of the island. "Decidedly she is aiming at securing Octave for Mdlle. Emilie," said I to myself; "but Mdlle. Emilie herself does not seem at all moved by the same idea." The poor girl sat looking dreamily on, evidently without taking the smallest interest in the conversation, but always gazing at me with the same imploring expression I had noticed before. "She will never consent to marry Octave," thought I again; "she is but seventeen—he is thirty-three. She will, no doubt, think him far too old."

CHAPTER IV. EVENING.

THE day drew near to its close. The evening was lovely after the great heat of the afternoon. Twilight, soft and balmy, with the thousand odours of the flower-garden ascending from the earth, and the ruddy glow of the sunset still lingering in the heavens, tempted us all to wander out towards the terrace, whence the view of the village and the church, lying close beneath the wall, was considered one of

the great attractions of the place. The terrace was planted with two long rows of closely-cropped hazel, cut in double arches, such as may be seen in many an old-fashioned garden belonging to the royal châteaux of France. People are thus enabled to walk up one alley, and return by the other, without the monotony of confinement of the eye to the same view. Our archway is particularly fine, and had given its name to the château. The thick screen of hazel is not divided in the middle, and so forms a close compact hedge, along which people may walk unperceived by the promenaders in the alley on the other side. The outward screen is cut into regular archways, through which the glorious and animated view of the little river and the wooden bridge, with the houses and gardens, the church and the Grande Place, are alternately perceptible, while, on the other side, the peace and quiet of the park, the Charmilles, with its rare old forest trees, its sparkling fountains, and grey old statues, is seen in charming and delightful contrast.

But the darkness beneath the covered archway was distasteful to Mdlle. Emilie, and she remained looking over the terrace towards the village to watch the moon rise above the village spire. I felt myself compelled to remain with her, as Madame de Méris, weak and delicate as she claimed to be, preferred to walk, with the help afforded by Cousin Octave's stout arm, in order to take another stroll beneath the tunnel. I, myself, was too restless to share Mdlle. Emilie's enjoyment of sitting on the low stone wall of the terrace to inhale the fresh evening breeze, and so walked leisurely to the end of the archway, musing on the events of the day, and wondering what was to follow. My heart was growing cold, methought—benumbed by the chill which had gone over it since the morning. I had lost, as it were, the very power of reflection, as the twilight, emblem of the gradual darkening of all my bright hopes, was gathering around me. As I turned to retrace my steps towards the spot where Mdlle. Emilie still remained seated on the wall, wrapt in thought, the voice of the Creole lady and that of my cousin Octave met my ear. The one was striking, from its Creole peculiarity, soft, yet penetrating; the other, trembling, and uncertain. Heaven will forgive me for not having hurried my footsteps to avoid listening, but the fear of being overheard by the talkers arrested my return.

"I can bear this no longer. Deception of this kind suits neither my position nor the name I bear, and if you will not speak to-night, I promise you that Mdlle. de Biencourt shall hear the whole truth from me to-morrow."

"But I have charged the Abbé with my message," replied Octave in a trembling tone. "He will tell my cousin of our position, and—and— Ah, if you only knew what the avowal cost me!" and he coughed, as though the very remembrance of his embarrassment were choking him as he spoke.

"You can judge, then, what a longer silence will cost me!" retorted Madame de Méris sharply. "You promised me that our engagement should be avowed at once, and that I should be received as your affianced wife, and share your cousinship with the rich old maid of the Charmilles."

"My dear Florinda," exclaimed Octave in a tone of the deepest alarm, "subdue your voice; you will be heard by—"

"And what if I am?" exclaimed the lady abruptly. "You should rejoice that what you please to call your 'secret' should be known, without the pain you seem to feel at having to publish it yourself."

I heard no more. My senses must have deserted me at that moment, for, when Mdlle. Emilie came running towards me, exclaiming that the dew was falling so fast that she felt quite chilled, I flung myself upon her bosom, and kissed her so tenderly, and hugged her so fondly, and burst into such a fit of sobbing, and dragged her with such force towards the château, that the poor girl was quite alarmed. I could see by the light of the lamp burning in the hall that she was deathly pale. The words she whispered in my ear will never be forgotten. She had heard the altercation beneath the tunnel as well as myself.

"Do not be frightened, Mdlle. Adèle," whispered she. "Such a little quarrel as this is nothing at all. You should hear them when they have real high words together. I sometimes tremble to think of what will be their life when they are married."

I almost shrieked aloud as she pronounced the fatal word, and, bursting from her without uttering a syllable, hurried to my own chamber and locked myself in. I heard her speed up the staircase after me, and feared that she might think I needed her assistance; but she turned back with an exclamation of astonishment, and descended slowly to the hall.

I was not long in recovering the con-

sciousness of my being, of my mission in this world, of the dignity of my position, and of all I owed to my father's memory as well as to myself. The Abbé's lessons came back to my soul at the right season, and, after a few moments' quiet self-commune, I raised my head once more, and remembered all this with thanks to Providence for having put an end to my delusive hopes while there was yet time. But one pang remained—a small and petty wound inflicted on my feminine sense of justice, as it were. I had been prepared for Cousin Octave's want of faith; I had accepted my age as its excuse, with the conviction that it was to Mdlle. Emilie that his unstable love had been transferred. But even this consolation was denied me. To the love of his early youth, whose freshness and beauty had faded while trusting through long years to his faith, to the daughter of the man who had taken him to his heart and helped him into life and independence, he had preferred a woman much older than himself, whose imperious beauty was marred, not merely by the lines of departed youth, but by those of vulgar arrogance and evil temper.

Again did I take up Cousin Octave's little looking-glass, and was pleased with the comparison on viewing the reflection of my visage there. The disturbance of soul I had so lately undergone had left no trace, save that a deeper shade of sadness was visible in the expression of the eyes; but no peevishness nor irritation, and not the slightest sign of envy or malice was to be beheld. As I restored the little mirror to its place upon the toilet-table, a large ill-folded letter, addressed to "My dear Adèle," in the large, ill-fashioned writing of the Abbé, met my gaze. A slight return of weakness was perceptible to myself in the trembling of my hand and the catching of my breath as I opened it—deliberately, however, and without dread. The communication was short and pithy:

"DAUGHTER, canst thou bear up under disappointment? I have much to tell thee. Be alone to-morrow, betimes, in the library. There will I await thee. Remember. Be firm, and place thy trust and confidence where alone thou canst not be betrayed."

I mused but for a moment over the message, then changed my dress, throwing aside the flowered muslin with its lace trimmings and gay ribbons which I had worn at dinner-time, and resumed

my suit of sober grey, and by this time I had changed my mood likewise, and resumed my calm demeanour. Madame de Méris was still under the influence of the irritation with which she had rebuked Cousin Octave's attempts at soothing her temper. Octave himself was silent and depressed, and Mdlle. Emilie looked perplexed and bewildered at my restored tranquillity. The supper passed off in conversation furnished by the Abbé and myself, and kept up with our usual gaiety and good-humour, airy and independent as though we had no other aim than that of inspiring the same gaiety and good-humour in our guests. As we parted for the night I observed a disposition to melting tenderness in Octave's voice. Trembling with emotion, he was about to whisper some word intended for my ear alone, when the Abbé approached, and taking my hand before Octave could raise it to his lips as he was about to do, he said gently, as he placed his own hand upon my head in token of benediction: "Forget not tomorrow in the library. I have that to say which can be listened to nowhere else so well." I raised my eyes and met his gaze openly, without curiosity and without fear.

"Dear father," I said, "I know all that you would say. No need to sound the charge to combat, the victory is already won."

To his look of astonishment I answered with a smile of the deepest reverence and love, and withdrew ere yet the amazement caused by my words had passed away.

CHAPTER V. NIGHT.

THE day has been long and eventful, but the night has come at last. Amid its silence and repose I can commune with my own heart. All is well, and I am pleased to find that the agitation of my soul has given place to calm, and ill-will towards my neighbours to resignation. I do not hurry to bed, for I have much to set right in my own mind—to readjust, in short, the sentiments which, having been so violently displaced, were becoming mixed and confused in my brain. I do not need a light, for the moon is shining brightly, and everything looks so calm and quiet that the fever and heat of my frame seem gradually to have ceased, and I feel refreshed even with the sight of the peace around me. But one single taper is shining throughout the village.

Its light comes from the casement of the poor old widow Martin, who is dying of sorrow and fatigue after a life of labour and anxiety to bring up her two boys. One of them, taken by the conscription, has been lately killed in Algeria, while the other, as eldest son left in mercy by the law as sole support of his mother, died a month ago, from an accident, in Paris, whither he had gone to earn sufficient wages to make her old age comfortable. I have been able to supply her with all that is needful, and she dies in peace, forgiving the fellow-workman whose negligence caused poor Michel to fall from the scaffolding, as well as the captain by whose rash command her darling Basil was compelled to march with his comrades to certain death in the ambush formed by the Arabs.

And so do I, too, retire to rest, forgiving all, and invoking Heaven's blessing even upon those by whom my soul has been stricken almost unto death.

This paper I found among the writings left by my dear Abbé. I had given it to him, according to my promise, on my thirty-first birthday. How far off it all seems now—a glimpse into another world! I am very old now, but not solitary. Emilie, restored to comparative health by my unceasing care, and unwilling to marry, resides with me, and together we do good, after the fashion of unmarried women, and find our reward in the happiness of others. The world smiled at the subjection to which Cousin Octave was condemned by his union with Madame de Méris; but we would often sigh at the prospect of his debasement. They returned to Martinique, where Octave died, still young—worried into his grave (so people said) by the temper of his wife. That lady's irritability has been increased by the terms of Octave's will, whereby he left me sole guardian of the only child born of the marriage with Madame de Méris, the reasons given for this step being anything but complimentary to the mother. So my interest in life is likely to increase rather than diminish, as it draws towards its close.

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